{ See Note at end. }

UNITY

CHURCH-DOOR PULPIT,

FOR

FREEDOM, FELLOWSHIP AND CHARACTER IN RELIGION.

Series 1. Chicago, February 23, 1885. No. 18.

HUMANITY UPLIFTED THROUGH SUFFERING.

By REV. DAVID UTTER, Minister of the Church of the Messiah, CHICAGO.

LUKE XXII, 31: And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat.

This sentence is in Luke's account of of the last supper of Jesus and his disciples. We would like to know what called forth this exclamatory, reproachful and yet tender sentence, what word or circumstance preceded it, but we cannot know, it is not written. I imagine that Peter had just given expression to his love of Jesus in some affectionate phrase —"Master, we all love you, I love you most of all." We do not know; but I think Peter must have said something to remind Jesus of the quick, passionate nature of the disciple, at once his danger and his strength. Jesus was that night anticipating death, and as he looked upon this impetuous friend, he could but foresee the trouble that was in store for him, give him a word of warning, and breathe for him a prayer that he shall be faithful.

Already, as Luke writes his gospel much has been forgotten of what Jesus did and said, and almost all that was said and done by the disciples. A few names remain, and enough more are found somehow to fill the sacred number twelve, and what the memory lacks, of looks, words and character, the imagination must supply.

But only three pictures, after all, of the chief actors, adorn the Gospel pages; the other figures that are made to move here and there, are dim and shadowy and have little human likeness. We see and know Jesus and Peter and John. And most of the color is put into the picture of Peter. He stands for humanity, human nature unpolished and unadorned, trembling with all human weaknesses, crowned with all true manliness, ready with his tears and also with his jokes, I must suppose, blundering through his impetuosity, hindering the good through his wilfulness, failing in duty sometime through cowardice, and falling so low as to falsehood, but repenting gloriously before to-morrow's dawn; thus, through the ages, the Christian imagination has represented him—the most thoroughly human of all the saints, hardly a saint at all, we think, if all the truth were known, but we love him all the same or even the more for his human weaknesses, and are thankful that HE is the one who stands at heaven's gate and holds the golden key.

This feeling in the church that gave Peter the highest place in our Christian mythology deserves consideration. It is,

I think, the feeling that gave birth to the idea of a mediator between God and man. When once the idea of God is born in the mind, the tendency of thought is to exalt him, give him ever more and more excellent attributes, and add perfection to perfection till our words record far more than imagination can conceive. But meanwhile *we* are upon the earth, and when thought returns to ourselves we are found very lowly, and very imperfect and weak. The wide separation between ourselves and God is felt, and we want some one to stand between us and Him, both to tell us of Him and to speak to Him for us. For a time in the Christian church Jesus filled that place. He was the one who, though standing in God's very presence, was yet human and knew the feeling of our infirmities, and made intercession on our behalf. It took his favor and word to make our prayer effectual. But the same exalting tendency of thought was at work now with the name Christ that had exalted God so highly as to put him beyond human reach. Jesus was at first at God's right hand, a beloved son whose mother was a woman, but by slow degrees he rose in human thought till, his humanity forgotten, he became equal with God, of the same substance, equal in age—eternity, —in power, omnipotence, and all other attributes. Then another mediator was needed, and the very human Peter stepped up to fill the place; and, as he was too certainly a man to be deified, he holds it still, though he shares its labors with Mary and many another saint and martyr.

We Unitarians reject the idea of a mediator altogether except as we make the word mean the same as teacher or leader; but the word has a great history in religion, and that history is the voice of humanity ascending for ages from all quarters of the globe in the cry to almighty God: "*Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.*"

This cry is not so much a cry of fear as it is the expression of a deep yearning for a perfect love, the love of a perfect being, or his approval and favor at least. Humanity wishes to believe and feel that there is enthroned somewhere in this universe the spirit of tenderness, of compassion, of pity and real mother love, that will excuse our many shortcomings, and and failures, "blot out our transgressions, and remember them against us no more forever."

That is a prayer that is always fervently uttered, so long as used at all—unless insincerely—"Forgive us our sins, be merciful and pardon us." And it is not the greatest sinners that pray thus; it is those with greatest aspirations toward a better life, those that most deeply feel the need of divine sympathy. Such prayers are but strong expressions of the faith that there at least *ought* to be a father's love in the heavens above us watching over the destinies of men.

And what humanity deeply feels ought to be the holy men are brought sometime to say *is*. The basis of all revelation in religion is this deep feeling in our hearts of what ought to be—the superstructure of revelation is built in the words of men and does not always stand the test of time. The Christian religion has done much to give God the attribute of tenderness, pitifulness, sympathy. When the writer of the Epistle to the Ephesians would exhort his bretheren to be tender-hearted, he asks them to forgive each other even as God has forgiven them. When Jesus would teach men to love their enemies—to be kind and tender-hearted not only to the good but also to the evil and unthankful and unholy, he cites the example of God, who sends his softening showers down to bless the bad man's fields equally with the gardens of the good, and says: "Be ye in like manner perfect."

This exaltation of tender-heartedness to a place on the throne of God did not begin in Christianity and is not peculiar to our religion. In India the Divine Being has been called mother as well as father for ages, and among the Jews long before the Christian era, God was said to be "merciful and gracious." "Like as a father pitieth his children so Yaveh pitieth those who fear him." "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open to their cry"—such sentiments are often reiterated in the Psalms and Prophets.

But I think there is a feeling widely

prevailing among the most religious people in all kinds of churches that the *perfection* of religion is reached in the completeness of this faith that God is good; that God is love, that His tender mercies are over all His works—that He is very tender-hearted and pitiful. These religious people are apt to believe that such faith is only possible in the particular church or sect to which they belong—a very great mistake, for the same faith is found everywhere.

The Universalist or Unitarian sings, God is love, with great fervor, and is too apt to believe that other denominations do not enjoy this faith. The Methodist prays to the loving Jesus, who knows all his feelings and was tempted in all points like as we are, and pities the poor Unitarian, who has not the great heart of such a Saviour, human and divine, to lean upon. And I suppose the Roman Catholic, beseeching Mary, the mother of Jesus, to intercede in her behalf with Christ, who now is God, wonders how human souls can endure life believing that the awful God cannot be approached by human beings. And so on to the end, I fear, religious people do not know each other. But common to all churches to the most religious in all churches, is the feeling that we have the perfect religion when we have enthroned divine tenderheartedness in the heavens.

When this view of religion is voiced by a poet such as Whittier, we all are carried away for the time into the heaven of divine love, where we behold an unspeakable vision of humanity uplifted and glorified through this same great feeling of love—that now, as tenderness and pity, stoops over the sinful and fallen, restoring them to purity and strength; and now as charity, spreads white wings of protection and help over the poverty-cursed populations of every land; and now as philanthropy, strikes the chains from all the bondmen of the earth and rears the temples for their education, and writes the laws for their defense against the wolves, as yet unconverted—and so prepares the way for the millennium of peace upon the earth.

The vision passes, and we ask, "is this all that we lack to make this world a heaven and to make angels of us all, women and men—simply love?" You see, our theology colors our life and our life colors our theology. If I make this spirit of tenderness, pity, sympathy, the chiefest of God's attributes; if I so conceive the invisible and mostly unknown power that rules all things, I will chiefly admire and desire those qualities in myself and my fellow men, chiefly believe in them as the saviours of humanity—believe that all human woe is due to our deficiency in such attributes. And conversely, if my greatest love and admiration among men is for the kind, the loving and tenderhearted, these qualities become the lodestone of my religious thoughts and feelings, and I rise to my best conception of Divinity through my highest perceptions of what is good in humanity. Say what we will against anthropomorphism, I suppose there is something of it in all of our theology in spite of our best efforts to exclude it.

The view of religion of which I am speaking—that it is most nearly perfect when it says most of God's love and mercy and exhorts most successfully to tenderheartedness among men, is, I think, a mistaken view.

We lack more than tenderheartedness to make this earth a heaven! We never want to forget God's love and mercy (*and they have been too often forgotten!*), but neither shall we, if wise, ever lose sight of his justice and severity. Tenderheartedness, love, charity among men are admirable qualitities, but if they stood alone they would not save the world—rather they do not, alone, constitute the perfect man.

As children we love those who are kind, tenderhearted, easy to be entreated, full of pity and compassion. And because we love them in others these qualities are earliest developed in ourselves. Then all our lives we have to be learning how to be hard-hearted enough to be good for anything; to accomplish any good or even to avoid doing absolute wrong. As you for the first time see your tenderhearted boy starting away to school you watch him out of sight, thinking "alas!

he will never again be so good and loving as now," and your eyes are filled with tears. But when he comes home again and tells you a hundred stories, that show you what he does not know, how he has been made the dupe and the victim of older boys simply because of that same loving heart, you will say: "Ah, Simon, Simon, Satan has been sifting you as wheat. Your heart has betrayed you, your love has made you weak and weakness is sin."

Inability to give other people pain is a weakness that leads to most lamentable situations, and, in connection with untamed desires, leads to most deplorable results. George Eliot's Romola contains a marvelous demonstration of the value of hard-heartedness by picturing two people who lack it. Had either Romola or Tito been less tender hearted, the worst tragedies of their lives would have been avoided. It is in seeing how sin is born of weakness in spite of love and good intentions that George Eliot is so far superior to Charles Dickens. Dickens most of the time seemed to think that if people were only sufficiently loving and tender-hearted all would be well. (It may be that love would cure all human ills, but, before we can say this or find it true, we have to import into the word love the full meaning of the word wisdom). Love as mere tenderness is closely allied to weakness, and in it there is little if any saving power.

That part of any philanthropic work that consists in awakening people to the need of it—in arousing their sympathies reaching their hearts—is in reality the easy part of the work. Many people persist in thinking that here is the great work of any moral reform—that if you can make people feel that here is a great evil and it ought to be cured—the work is done. But in truth it is not so. In the conquering of any great evil the most arduous part of the work has to be done by the hard-headed and comparatively hard-hearted people, who work along intellectual lines without allowing their sympathies to guide them at all.

It did not take very long to excite the sympathies of the people of the Northern United States on behalf of the slaves of the South. The sentimental part of the abolition of slavery was accomplished with great rapidity. Mrs. Stowe's appeal to the hearts of her countrymen was successful beyond her wildest dreams of success. Three hundred thousand copies of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" sold in the first year. The work in the hearts of the people was done in a very few years.

But the real good sought in the abolition of slavery is not yet accomplished—is only being accomplished slowly and painfully, not by the tender-hearted, but by the slow-footed wisdom that wastes no energies in sympathetic overflow. The abolition of slavery, without the elevation and education of the race that had been enslaved, would have produced greater evils than it cured. It would not have cured many, and the education and uplifting of a race of men is a process *involving much suffering*, and it requires a certain hard-heartedness even to stand by and see the pain accomplish that whereunto it is sent. Look at two points of the problem, and see the pain of this educational process. If the blacks are not to be slaves they must be freemen, if freemen, then self-supporting and law-abiding.

To force them into self-support is where the hard-heartedness is required. You will see some of them die of starvation; you will see most of them living on the ragged-edge of destitution and hunger all the time. You grow tender-hearted a moment, and you re-enslave them by bringing them into your debt, or you pauperize them by your bounty. Nothing but the terrible sufferings behind that law of nature, "*He that will not work neither shall he eat*," can drive such a race into self-support. Nature's whip has to take the place of that of the slave-driver or the race will not improve, and if, through tender-heartedness you interfere, you are too likely to simply delay the process of education.

Self-control is also to be taught them only through suffering. Hard-hearted officers of the law must let the "law take its course," as the saying is, see that it is executed; hard-hearted doctors let nature's

laws take their course also, and this for many years before the painful results will begin to disappear.

Upon the Indian question the sentimental part of the work is being rapidly done, perhaps even overdone already. For here also it is only the hard-hearted work that will ever amount to anything. So long as the native races are allowed to live according to their savage habits, neither preaching nor annuities, blankets nor guns nor plows nor needles will do them much good—more harm than good, generally. To elevate them, to better them, is to civilize them, and the cheapest and least painful way to civilize them would be the most unswervingly rigid and apparently hard-hearted. Force them to take farms, and give up their guns, and send their children to school—make them self-supporting and law-abiding, and then treat them simply as other citizens.

But lest these illustrations of my principle excite some difference of opinion, let us retreat to more familiar ground, the elevation of the poor in our cities.

A pamphlet recently published in London is attracting great attention and discussion there; it is called The Bitter Cry of the Poor of London. I will not discuss the book; we all know its story—the thousands and thousands so very poor, poverty breeding disease and disease festering on and on in filthy holes and tenements, causing agonies which the imagination refuses to sum up and contemplate. Poverty breeding sin and sinners, moral disease of which the physical maladies are but a feeble type, making every night horrible with murders and nameless crimes and most streets in some measure unsafe even in the open day—it is indeed a bitter cry. And we hear it here in Chicago. We shut our ears mostly, as the rich in London do, we do not drive nor walk much through the poverty-stricken quarters; they are very disagreeable, *but the misery is there!*

Now the feeling that is first awakened when we hear this bitter cry is that of sympathy and self-condemnation—shall I allow a fellow mortal to go hungry while I have two pieces of bread? My answer as a child is "no." The tender loving sympathetic heart feels "no" and feels that if only the rich were tender-hearted all would speedily be cured. But a little experience and we fear we are growing hard-hearted, but we say "I will not be hard-hearted and work on." Later, still working, we rejoice that we are hard-hearted and that our heads are clear and we see that the world's tender-heartedness causes more misery than it relieves. I say this, friends, because I am sure it is true, not expecting any one to believe it who has not worked somewhat in trying to benefit poor people, but confident of the approval of all who have ever tried to go about doing good and who remember their experiences.

In the discussions of the poverty question that have followed the "Bitter Cry," the most practical remedies proposed are the hardest-hearted. "Drive these poor people out into the streets and blow up their houses and wall up their dungeons—make laws forcing landlords to build on certain approved plans, the tenements to be occupied by only so many and at a certain low rental." This is severe both upon the capitalist and the pauper, but it is wise.

If it now seems to some one that I have been preaching a sermon *against* the text, "Be ye kind, tender-hearted," I beg him ts hear me a little further. I have been trying to show that men are not bettered by kindness, tender love and plenteous mercy *alone*—that we lack more than that to make this earth a heaven; that merely converting the feelings of men is a very little matter; that they are uplifted, driven upward, chiefly through pain; and I now wish to note the theological bearing of this fact. Is there not here a hint, or something more than a hint, of the necessity of severity in God's dealings with man? Indeed, in a certain way we have been viewing God's works, for man—soul and body—with all his notions and customs and prejudices and sins; man in society, as it is, is the work of God. God's work is in the bitter cry that rises from the sinful city. He is in the quick sympathy that responds gushingly in injurious relief; but most of all He is in the hard-hearted wisdom

that forces the wretched away from their misery, refusing to gratify them, but benefiting them against their desires. They imperfectly know God who think only of his tender goodness, forgetting the travail and pain in which wisdom is forever born—the infinite sweep of this law, whose severity falls like fate, touching with agony those who dare to disobey. They see but one side of religious truth who feel that religion reaches perfection as it preaches and sings most of God's loving kindness and forgiveness. There is no forgiveness in one sense in the common understanding of that word; the past is irrevocable—the only pardon is in the law of nature that allows man to live down and outgrow his mistakes.

On the other hand, the severity of God is also all in law, and is simple justice consequences of deeds, and neither wrath nor malice are found in Him.

> The wrong that pains my soul below
> I dare not throne above.
> I know not of his hate—I know
> His goodness and His love.
>
> Not mine to look where cherubim
> And seraphs may not see,
> But nothing can be good in Him
> Which evil is in me.
>
> I dimly guess from blessings known
> Of greater out of sight,
> And with the chastined Psalmist own
> His judgments, too, are right.

So welcome Satan who comes to the earth to sift men like wheat. The Satan of whom Jesus spoke in the passage taken as our text was not the author of evil—God is the author of that, and he controls it all finally I doubt not for human discipline and good—but Satan, in Jesus's mind, stood for the tempter, one of God's angels to whom was given the task of trying, testing people, proving the stuff that is in them. With us the words Satan and angel are pretty nearly worn out but let us say that Satan is that tendency in events, that providence in nature that tries and disciplines and schools us through suffering and pain—what I have called the severity of God. The providence or provision in nature by which He sifts men and nations and casts the evil out and brings the good to pass, makes men ashamed of their meanness and weakness, shows all souls the path of life leading ever upward through many labors, but into increasing light, where the rapturous joy by which life's first steps were tempted is replaced by the peace of God that passes understanding. With such definition, Satan has yet much good work to do in our world. We are like Peter too easily thrilled with passion, too fickle in our adherence to the Lord of all light and life and Satan has us and is sifting us like wheat. As the years run on, the worse qualities are sifted out, we become converted and can strengthen our brethren.

May we not really grow hard-hearted, but only clear of vision and steady of nerve, ready to give pain, ready to endure sorrow or shame, to go through evil report or good report in the service of the Great God, who, over all, is blessed forevermore!

UNITY CHURCH-DOOR PULPIT for March will contain a sermon by Rev. R. Heber Newton. Subject: "Earthly Immortality." Extra copies will be supplied at $2.50 per hundred if ordered in advance, The first series of the CHURCH-DOOR PULPIT will close March 23, with a sermon by Rev. C. C. Everett on "The One Religion." A second series of twenty numbers will be begun in April. Price as heretofore, $1.00 for single subscriptions, or 50 cents where ten or more copies are sent to one address. Persons subscribing *now*, and remitting $1.00 in advance for the new series, will receive the two concluding numbers of the present series free.

*** Published Semi-Monthly (except during July and August), by The Colegrove Book Co., 135 Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill. Ten copies or more to one address, each, 50 cts. a year. Single copy, one year $1.00. Entered at the Chicago Post-Office as second-class matter.

IN BUYING BOOKS

Any person can obtain a Discount from Publishers' Prices averaging

TWENTY PER CENT.

BY CALLING ON US OR ADDRESSING US BY LETTER. A FULL STOCK OF THE BEST NEW AND STANDARD BOOKS KEPT CONSTANTLY ON HAND.

LIBERAL BOOKS A SPECIALTY,

OUR STORE BEING THE WESTERN AGENCY FOR THE PUBLICATIONS OF GEO. H. ELLIS AND THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

THE COLEGROVE BOOK COMPANY,

135 Wabash Ave., - - CHICAGO, ILL.

Our "Church-Door Pulpit" hints its purpose in its name. It aims to furnish fortnightly a transfigured tract,—transfigured by being paid for, and by representing not so much a given system of beliefs as the emphasis, in somewhat varying beliefs, on "Freedom, Fellowship and Character in Religion;" this tract to be taken from the rack or table at the church-door to the home, there to serve its little mission by reading in the family, lending to a neighbor, mailing to a distant friend, etc. We hope the plan may be destined to wide adoption by Liberal churches as part of their regular church-work.

The word "UNITY" in the title bears to the Committee who arrange the series a wide meaning, pointing more to the substance, than to the forms, of religious thought and faith; and in inviting contributions they have sought, not only through the whole range, but in both directions beyond the range, of those who bear the "Unitarian" name,—though most of the writers must naturally be found within that name. "New Orthodoxy," "New Judaism," those who care for no name but "Religion," and the "Ethical Societies," will all be represented. The choice of subject is left to the writers; and *each writer is responsible for his own utterance alone, and for nothing else in the series.* "One of your best—a life-helping sermon, or a thought-sermon reaching the life," was the invitation sent out.